

Offaly's All-Ireland Winning Panel – 1923 Junior Hurling Championship

JACK HOLLIGAN (C)

Offaly's first All-Ireland winning captain was born in 'The Walk', Kinnitty on 12th August 1895. His parents James, a farmer, and Kate had four children, with John (Jack) being the second eldest.

Jack won Offaly Senior Hurling Championship titles with Kinnitty in 1920 and again, as captain, in 1923.

He had the honour of captaining Offaly from the full back position to win the All-Ireland Junior Hurling Championship final in 1923, held in October 1924. Afterwards, he was one of the players who emigrated to New York in April 1925. While there, he enjoyed huge success with the all-conquering Offaly hurling team, winning 11 Senior Hurling Championships in the city, and being captain for several of them.

A further honour was bestowed on Jack when he was selected as team captain of the USA (effectively New York) hurling teams that returned to Ireland to play in the 1928 and 1932 Tailteann Games at Croke Park. He also played for New York teams against visiting All-Ireland champions, including Tipperary and Cork, who travelled across the Atlantic during the late 1920s and early '30s.

Jack remained involved with the Offaly GAA Club in New York after his retirement from hurling. He never married and passed away in New York after a short illness in 1967. After his funeral, the tricolour was draped on his coffin in recognition of his involvement in the Irish War of Independence. He was buried in St Raymond's Cemetery, Bronx, alongside his cousin PJ Grimes, who was a leading figure in the Irish American community in New York for several decades.

His younger brother Jim won an All-Ireland Junior Hurling Championship medal with Offaly in 1929.

JIM CARROLL

Jim (James) Carroll was born into a large farming family in Ballyatty, Coolderry on 27 June 1897, the son of John and Mary Carroll.

Jim's inter-county career began when he was still a teenager, selected on the Offaly team that won the Leinster Junior Hurling Championship title in 1915 and narrowly lost the All-Ireland final to Tipperary.

He eventually made amends with victory in the 1923 All-Ireland final and he was credited with making a crucial clearance in the closing stages of the two point victory over Cork.

Subsequently, Jim lined out at corner back in the Leinster Senior Hurling Championship finals of 1924, 1926 and 1928, all of which ended in defeat.

He also enjoyed a very successful club career, winning one Junior and six Senior Club Championship medals with Coolderry.

In his later life, Jim's contribution to hurling in the county was recognised when he was honoured with the Offaly Sports Star Hall of Fame Award in 1983 (which was then organised by Tullamore Harriers). His descendants have represented Offaly hurling at the highest level, among them his grandsons Joe, Billy & Johnny Dooley, and Liam Hogan, all of whom won All-Ireland SHC medals, and several of his great-grandsons. Jim passed away in 1986.

MICHAEL CARROLL

Born in the townland of Knockhill to parents Michael and Bridget in 1899, midfielder Michael (Mick) Carroll was actually the longest surviving member of the All-Ireland winning panel, reaching the age of 92 before passing away on 1st May 1991.

At Club level, Michael once recalled that Knockhill briefly had a Club, but he ended up hurling with Kinnitty, with whom he won an Offaly Senior Hurling Championship medal in 1930.

At inter-county level, he won a Leinster Junior Hurling medal in 1922 (there was no All-Ireland series that year) and returned to the Junior ranks for the 1923 All-Ireland Junior semi-final and final. Michael and Jack Horan were credited with giving Offaly the upper-hand at midfield in that game.

Michael won another Leinster Junior Hurling medal with Offaly in 1929, though he wasn't involved in the All-Ireland final team, which featured his brother Tom. He also lined out in the Leinster SHC final defeats in 1924 and 1928, and remained deeply interested in hurling throughout his long life. He lived locally with his wife and family, where some of his descendants have carried on the hurling tradition to the present day in the parish, which is now represented by the Kilcormac-Killoughey Club. Among them is his great-grandson Oisín Carroll, who played Minor Championship with Offaly in 2024.

STEPHEN CLOONAN

Stephen Cloonan deserves recognition as one of the most committed administrators ever to serve with Offaly GAA. He was County Board Secretary and a member of the Offaly Junior Hurling panel in 1923/'24, by which time he was representing Tullamore, although it seems he was injured for the All-Ireland final.

Born to parents Patrick and Mary Cloonan in Fortal, Birr on 1 September 1897, Stephen was, like his father, a school teacher before entering the local service and was 'superintendent of home assistance' in Offaly for over 30 years.

Stephen captained Offaly to win the Leinster Junior Hurling final in 1923, and he was on the Leinster panel for the Tailteann Games in 1924. Though he missed out on playing in the All-Ireland final, he represented the county in the Leinster Senior Hurling final in 1928, which Offaly lost.

During a difficult period for the GAA, as Ireland emerged from years of turmoil in the 1920s, Stephen combined his playing duties with that of County Board Secretary. He held this position, but for a brief break, for over three decades and was still in the role at the time of his untimely passing in May 1955.

Stephen also represented Offaly on Leinster and Central Council and served as Chairman and Treasurer of Tullamore GAA Club. He became a hugely respected figure in GAA circles across the country. One of his lasting legacies is his major contribution to the development of O'Connor Park and St Brendan's Park. It was stated, in his obituary, that: "The great GAA parks in Tullamore and Birr will always remain proud and imperishable memorials to his administrative abilities."

Stephen was married with five children and one of his sons, Paddy, won Minor medals with Dublin when studying in the city.

DICK CONWAY

Richard (Dick) Conway was born in Ballincur, Kinnitty, on 25 October 1893. He enjoyed success on Kinnitty teams that won Offaly Senior Hurling Championship titles in the 1920s.

Dick was the only substitute introduced for Offaly in the 1923 All-Ireland Junior Hurling Championship final (played in 1924) and reports stated he soon set up Martin Whelan for an important second half score.

It appears that Dick's only inter-county Senior appearance actually came in the 1923 Leinster Championship defeat to Laois. However, he was a member of the Offaly team that won the Leinster Junior final against Dublin in 1929 and remained on the panel for the All-Ireland final, although not introduced in the defeat of Cork.

Dick remained single all his life and never moved from his native Kinnitty, where he passed away in November 1967, just a few weeks after his club mate and captain from 1924, Jack Holligan.

ANDY CORDIAL

Andy Cordial of Kinnitty, the youngest of three brothers on the team that won the 1923 All-Ireland Junior Hurling Championship final, was a prolific scorer on the hurling fields in Ireland and New York.

Born on 7 September 1900, Andy's success with Kinnitty included Offaly Senior Hurling Championships in 1920 and 1923. He was a member of the Offaly panel that won the Leinster Junior Hurling Championship final in 1922, defeating Kilkenny, but there was no All-Ireland series that year.

In 1924, he starred on the Leinster team that won an inter-provincial tournament held as part of the Tailteann Games, scoring four goals in the final against Munster at Croke Park.

Later that year, when the delayed 1923 All-Ireland JHC final was also held at Croke Park, Andy scored 2-1 in the narrow defeat of Cork. Two weeks later, he lined out in the 1924 Leinster SHC final defeat to Dublin.

A promising future for the Faithful County never materialised as Andy emigrated to New York the following April. Previously, he had been involved in the War of Independence, for which he was sentenced to hard labour in Mountjoy Prison in 1921.

While living in the US, Andy prospered as a free-scoring forward on the Offaly hurling team that dominated the New York Championship, winning several titles, including four-in-a-row between 1925 and 1928, inclusive.

Andy returned to Croke Park as a member of the USA team that played Ireland in the Tailteann Games in 1928. A few days after that game, the visiting team travelled to Birr to play Offaly and Andy again scored a goal in that encounter.

He decided to remain in America for the rest of his life. Married to a Tipperary native, they had two children, a boy and a girl, and several grandchildren. In his later years, Andy moved to Baltimore, Maryland, where he passed away, aged 90, in 1991. Incidentally, his grandson still has possession of his GAA medals in America, including the All-Ireland Junior medal won 100 years ago.

BILL CORDIAL

Bill Cordial was born into the renowned hurling family from Cumber, Kinnitty on 19th November 1896.

With his club, he won Offaly Senior Hurling Championship medals in 1920, 1923 (played in '24) and 1930. During the War of Independence, he was interned in the Curragh during 1921.

Bill played in the Leinster Senior Hurling Championship for Offaly in 1923 but, like other senior players, was somehow deemed eligible for the '23 All-Ireland Junior semi-final and final, which were held in '24. There were also allegations that he had played under a false name in the 1923 Leinster Junior semi-final versus Dublin!

Also a member of the Offaly Senior teams defeated in the Leinster finals of 1924 and 1926, he became the first Offaly hurler to line out in a Railway Cup final in 1929, when a member of the Leinster side defeated by Munster at Croke Park.

Bill was inducted into the Offaly Sportstar Hall of Fame in 1975 and was the subject of a well-received television interview with Brendan O'Reilly in 1982, which still survives in the RTE Archives. In it, he spoke of hurling with club and county and his life in general.

A bachelor, Bill worked on the family farm all his adult life, before passing away in 1984. One of the tributes paid to him stated: "The heathered hills stand like sentinels in tribute to the grandest hurler of them all."

MICK CORDIAL

Mick was the eldest of the Cordial brothers from Kinnitty who won 1923 All-Ireland Junior Hurling Championship medals with Offaly. There were also occasions where he represented his county alongside another brother, Jim.

Born on 16 November 1894, he won Offaly SHC medals with his Club in 1920 and 1923 (the latter held in '24). In between, he was deeply involved in the War of Independence. He was an officer in the National Army throughout the Civil War.

Mick made a name for himself at inter-county level as a member of the Offaly team that won the Leinster Junior Hurling final in 1915, and reached the All-Ireland final, which was narrowly lost to Tipperary.

After the 1923 All-Ireland JHC triumph, Mick lined out on the Offaly teams defeated in the 1924 and 1926 Leinster Senior Hurling Championship finals. Significantly, he was selected for Leinster in the first ever Railway Cup competition, playing in the semi-final victory over Connacht in late 1926, and being a substitute (possibly injured) for the final in March 1927.

He subsequently emigrated to New York and won Championship medals with the all-conquering Offaly team in the city. In the mid-'30s, he returned to Ireland and his native parish with his wife. The couple did not have children, and Mick passed away in 1972.

FRANK DOHERTY

Francis (Frank) Doherty was born in Derrinboy, Kilcormac, on 1st April 1894, the youngest child in a farming family reared by parents Francis (snr) and Catherine.

Frank lined out in the 1923 Leinster Junior semi-final defeat of Dublin, the Leinster final victory over Laois, and the All-Ireland semi-final defeat of Galway. However, he was an unused sub for the All-Ireland final versus Cork at Croke Park.

In the 1920s, Kilcormac didn't always field a hurling team so Frank lined out with Killoughey, though there are no records of championship success for the club during that period.

Frank remained in Kilcormac all his life, where he married. When he passed away in July 1973, he was survived by his wife and six children. A tribute to him stated he "gave worthy service to the National Cause in the War of Independence" and "was a good-humoured and pleasant man".

Frank's great-grandson Mark Mulrooney was a member of the Offaly panel that won the Leinster and All-Ireland Under 20 Championship titles in 2024, ensuring a direct link between the county's first and latest inter-county hurling titles.

BILL FOX

Bill Fox of Drumcullen was a formidable defender on the Offaly Junior Hurling team in 1924, with one newspaper describing him as man of the match in the long-delayed All-Ireland final of 1923. He later became a legendary figure in the GAA community in New York.

Bill lined out with his brother Pat in the All-Ireland final while another brother, Hugh, played a role in the successful Leinster Junior campaign in 1923.

He was a member of the Drumcullen team that won the Offaly SHC in 1918 (they received a walk-over in the final the following year also). During the War of Independence, he was one of the many Offaly players interned in the Curragh. Remarkably, he was on an Offaly football team that won a tournament held in the camp, the medal for which is still in his granddaughter's possession in New York.

He emigrated to the U.S.A. in 1925, with some of his team mates, and was a key member of the Offaly team that dominated the New York Senior Hurling Championship, winning 11 medals during a long career. He was an automatic choice on the New York panel for several years, including the 1932 visit to Ireland for the Tailteann Games. In New York, he was also reported to have played Gaelic football, and "won many honours in racing, jumping and (shot) putting". It was stated that "few opponents could match his strength and endurance."

Bill married and had two children in New York, where he remained for the rest of his life, while retaining a strong interest in Offaly GAA affairs. Indeed, such was his reputation that the Offaly GAA Clubs in New York presented the 'Bill Fox Memorial Award' to the Players of the Year for several years.

He passed away in February 1981, and was laid to rest in St Raymond's Cemetery, The Bronx.

PAT FOX

Pat Fox was the second eldest of eight children born to parents William and Catherine in the townland of Coologe, Eglish, on 10th January 1895 and with his younger brother Bill played in the back line for Offaly in the 1923 All-Ireland Junior Hurling Championship final victory.

Pat won Offaly Senior Hurling Championship medals with Drumcullen, and also featured in the Leinster Senior Hurling Championship finals of 1924 and 1926, both of which Offaly lost.

He then emigrated to New York, and joined the Offaly hurling team there, alongside his brothers Bill and Hugh. He won Senior Hurling medals with the Offaly team that were dominant in the city at the time.

Pat remained single and relatives have stated that he came back to Ireland in 1941 with the intention of buying land, but instead returned to New York. Sadly, it is believed that his death in June 1942 was a result of an accident in work – the first of the All-Ireland winning team to pass away. He was laid to rest in the Gate of Heaven Cemetery, Hawthorne, New York.

A watch presented to Pat after the New York Senior Hurling final of 1930 remains a treasured possession of his nephew in Offaly.

NED HAYES

Goalkeeper, Ned Hayes was born in 'The Walk', Kinnitty – across the road from team captain Jack Holligan – in February 1884. He is actually the only player to have won an All-Ireland medal with Offaly who was born before the official founding of the Gaelic Athletic Association.

Newspaper reports praised Ned for his performance in the 1923 All-Ireland JHC final, including a late save as Cork went in search of a match-winning goal.

A couple of weeks later, he was on the Offaly team that lost the 1924 Leinster Senior Hurling Championship final to Dublin.

With Kinnitty, he won Senior Hurling Championship medals in 1920 and 1923. A farmer all his life, Ned never married and passed away in his home village in 1973.

JACK HORAN

Midfielder, Jack Horan was born in the townland of Ballaghanoher, Banagher on 13 July 1898, but the census of 1911 lists him as living with an aunt and uncle in Cree, Coolderry.

Available records do not show him as being a member of the Coolderry teams that won Offaly SHC finals when he was a teenager in 1916 and '17, though the substitutes are unknown.

He played on the Offaly team that won the Leinster Junior Hurling final in 1923 and kept his place for the All-Ireland final the following October.

Jack emigrated to New York in 1925. Continuing to hurl in his adopted country, he won 11 New York Senior Hurling Championship medals with Offaly. He returned to Ireland when selected on the USA hurling teams for the Tailteann Games in 1928 and 1932.

When Jack passed away in 1972, he was survived by his wife and three sons. A tribute to him in the Irish Echo newspaper said he was a "well-known businessman in New York city for many years" and "deservedly popular, particularly so among Gaelic sports circles". He was laid to rest in St Raymond's Cemetery, Bronx, where two of his team mates Bill Fox and Jack Holligan are also interred.

PETER LYONS

Peter Lyons of Drumcullen remains one of the longest serving players in Offaly hurling history. Born to parents John and Lizzie on 1st July 1895, his father's profession was listed as 'game keeper'. He first lined out with Offaly junior hurlers in 1913 and won a Leinster JHC medal with the county in 1915, losing the All-Ireland final to Tipperary.

He was soon elevated to the Offaly senior team, but returned to the Junior ranks for the 1923 All-Ireland semi-final and final, both of which took place in 1924.

A couple of weeks after the All-Ireland triumph, he lined out in the Leinster Senior Hurling final defeat to Dublin. He would later captain Offaly in the Leinster Senior finals of 1926 and 1928, but both of those ended in defeat also.

With Drumcullen, Peter won the 1918 and 1919 Offaly SHC finals, but his best days came when he captained the club to five SHC titles in the space of six years between 1924 and 1929, inclusive. He won his eighth and final medal in 1933. Meanwhile, he was a member of the Leinster panel which lost the Railway Cup final to Munster in 1928.

Although he had retired from inter-county hurling by the mid-1930s, the Offaly selectors persuaded him to return for the championship game v Westmeath in 1937, on that occasion he became the oldest player to line out with an Offaly team in either code. It also meant his inter-county career stretched for 25 years.

Peter Lyons, who was married and reared a family in Drumcullen, passed away in 1985. Thanks to the generosity of his descendants, the Lyons Pitch in the Faithful Fields is named in his memory.

JIMMY MURPHY

James (Jimmy) Murphy was born on 9th October 1894, so celebrated his 30th birthday just before winning his All-Ireland medal. He grew up with his farming family in Cully, Killoughey.

Newspaper reports detailed how Jimmy came close to scoring goals on a couple of occasions from his wing-forward position in the 1923 All-Ireland Junior Hurling final. He was involved in the move that resulted in Offaly's third, match-clinching, goal by Andy Cordial.

Jimmy was one of the players who featured in most if not all the games throughout the Leinster and All-Ireland campaign, including the provincial final victory over Laois. A couple of weeks after the All-Ireland victory, he also played in the 1924 Leinster Senior Hurling final, which Offaly lost to Dublin.

He played his club hurling with Killoughey in an era when they weren't particularly successful in Offaly Championships. Jimmy lived all his life in Killoughey, where he remained single and worked as a farmer. He passed away in December 1970.

WILLIE RYAN

Willie Ryan of Birr was the youngest member of the All-Ireland winning Offaly Junior Hurling team, aged 22 when the final took place in 1924. Born on 15 January 1902, he was one of 13 children in the family who resided in Mill Street.

He featured prominently through Offaly's triumphant campaign, described as the "outstanding figure on the Offaly side" in the first round victory over Kildare. He scored three goals in the Leinster final versus Laois, and his second half point gave Offaly a lead that they never relinquished in the All-Ireland final.

After lining out in the Leinster Senior Hurling final defeat to Dublin soon after, he was one of four members of the All-Ireland winning team who left together in April 1925. (Many of his siblings also later emigrated to America.)

Willie played a key role on the Offaly Senior Hurling team that dominated the New York Championship, winning several medals and regularly featuring among the leading scorers.

Also selected on the USA team that travelled to compete in the hurling tournament as part of the Tailteann Games at Croke Park in 1928, he enjoyed the privilege of playing against his native county in a challenge game at St Brendan's Park a few days later, when he and his team-mates were given a heroes' welcome home.

Willie married in New York and had two children. He worked for the Daniel Reeves grocery chain and then Bankers Trust in the city. Having suffered from lung cancer, he passed away on 11 September 1955, aged only 53, and was laid to rest in Mount Saint Mary Cemetery, Flushing NY.

In a tribute to Willie after his passing, the Irish Echo newspaper said he was "unquestionably one of the best hurling forwards in New York and when the great Offaly hurling selection was making history...this flashy forward was an outstanding figure."

MICK SPAIN

Mick Spain of Drumcullen was sub-goalkeeper for the 1923 All-Ireland Junior Hurling Championship final, though he played between the posts on many occasions for Offaly. A member of a large farming family that lived in the townland of Tinnacross, he was born on 10 August 1898.

Mick was in the goals with the Drumcullen team that dominated the Offaly Senior Hurling Championship during the 1920's and was still their No. 1 when they regained the title in 1933.

He first came to prominence with Offaly as goalkeeper on the team that won the 1922 Leinster Junior Hurling Championship final (though there was no All-Ireland series that year). In 1923, he lined out in the Leinster Senior Hurling Championship defeat to Laois, and re-joined the Junior panel for the All-Ireland series in 1924.

Mick was actually the No. 1 choice for the Offaly Senior team for the remainder of the 1920's, including appearances in the provincial finals of 1926 and '28. Subsequently, he regained his place for the Senior team for the Championships of 1934 and '35.

A bachelor, Mick farmed in Drumcullen all of his adult life. He passed away in August 1982. Current Offaly camogie player, Clodagh Leahy, is his great-grandniece.

TOM SULLIVAN

One of two hurlers from Carrig on the 1923 All-Ireland winning panel, Tom Sullivan was the son of Tom and Mary Sullivan, who resided in the townland of Annagh.

Players from that area at the time lined out with Birr and despite his young age, he won an Offaly Senior Hurling Championship medal in 1915, alongside his older brother Pat. It also appears that both of them contributed to Offaly's Leinster Junior Hurling Championship winning side in 1915 (though these club and inter-county finals were not held until 1916), as a medal exists with his name inscribed on it.

Pat Sullivan captained Offaly to win the Leinster JHC final in 1922, but there was no mention of Tom on that occasion. Tom did play in the Leinster Senior Hurling Championship versus Laois in 1923, and was listed among the substitutes for the All-Ireland JHC final, which took place in October 1924.

From available records, Tom did not represent Offaly at Senior level subsequently. However, he kept playing at Club level and when the Carrig & Riverstown Club formed in 1933 (initially under the Club name Lockeen), they enjoyed immediate success with a Junior Hurling Championship title.

Tom never married and spent his adult life farming in Carrig, where he passed away in 1959. He was a grand-uncle of Offaly Camogie All-Star, Sheila Sullivan.

MARTIN WHELAN

Martin Whelan played a key role for Offaly in the ground-breaking All-Ireland Junior Hurling Championship final, scoring a goal in the first half and a point in the second half, in the 3-4 to 3-2 defeat of Cork at Croke Park.

Born on 25 November 1896, his birth cert states the family resided at Ballyduff, Carrig, whereas the 1911 census lists them as living in the nearby townland of Ballykinash.

With no team in Carrig at the time, Martin was a member of the Birr panel that won the Offaly Senior Hurling Championship final in 1915.

He played in the All-Ireland semi-final and final of the delayed 1923 Junior Hurling Championship, and also featured in the Leinster Senior Hurling final of 1924, which Offaly lost to Dublin.

By then, Martin was living in Tipperary and he went on to win North Tipperary Senior Hurling Championship medals with Toomevara and a Junior medal with Castleiney. It is also believed he hurled with Nenagh for a period and played some inter-county games for Tipperary in the 1920's.

Martin worked for Tipperary County Council and spent the rest of his life in Toomevara, where he married and raised a family. He passed away in 1980.

NICHOLAS WHITE

Centre back, Nicholas White was praised at a GAA meeting in 1924 for his willingness to cycle 10 to 12 miles to play hurling for his county.

Born in 1896, the youngest member of the family who resided at Ballaghaderry, Killoughey, he hurled for the local club and came to prominence as a member of the Offaly team that won the Leinster Junior Hurling Championship in 1922.

He lined out in the All-Ireland semi-final and final of the 1923 All-Ireland Junior Hurling Championship, both of which took place in 1924. He also played in the Leinster Senior Hurling finals of 1924 and 1926, both of which Offaly lost.

A local newspaper tribute following his passing in November 1983 noted that being on the All-Ireland winning Junior team was his "proudest moment". It was stated that, "Despite his contribution to an historic achievement, the late Mr White remained a quiet and unassuming gentleman, reluctant to talk of his own deeds but ever willing to recall the gallantry of his former colleagues of 60 years ago."

A bachelor and farmer, Nicholas White was laid to rest in Mountbolus cemetery, aged 88.